



VISN 4 MIRECC
Executive Summary

Mission

The mission of the VISN 4 MIRECC is the treatment and prevention of comorbid medical, mental health, and/or substance use disorders, with the aim of improving the health, quality of life, and outcomes of healthcare services for veterans with mental illness.

Vision

Our shared vision is to enhance the overall mental health of veterans in VISN 4 and throughout the nation.

Goals

- Focus on **comorbidity** - *the co-occurrence of mental health disorders with either general medical, mental health, and/or substance use disorders.*
- Examine causal factors in the development of comorbid conditions.
- Assess impact of comorbidity on:
 - the identification and classification of disorders
 - the development and implementation of treatments
 - access to treatment and the impact of treatments on outcomes
- Integrate basic, clinical, and services research with educational and clinical programs.
 - Provide leadership in the translation of comorbidity research findings into clinical services for veterans with comorbid conditions.
- Serve as a comorbidity resource center to all VISN 4 medical centers and the VA nationally.

Key accomplishments

- Dr. Ira Katz became the Deputy Chief Patient Care Services Officer for Mental Health.
- Dr. David Oslin was appointed the MIRECC Director.
- Three VA Merit awards were awarded to MIRECC investigators in the past year.

Strategic Goals 2007 - 2008

- Advance the science of comorbidity research.
- Support the development of junior faculty and trainees interested in research careers.
- Expand the portfolio of funded research focused on improving our understanding and treatment of mental disorders.
- Provide an infrastructure to support MIRECC research and maintain a high level of intellectual growth and compliance.
- Support the expansion of clinical programs and implementation of evidence based treatment strategies.

Notables

- We welcomed 8 new faculty members in the past two years.
- Robert Sweet, MD was appointed Co-Research Director.

- Adam Gordon, MD was appointed Associate Clinical Director.
- We have worked with both Offices of Research (Pittsburgh and Philadelphia) and our academic affiliates to assure compliance with research data security and the reorganization of IT.

Research Achievements

- Number of Peer Reviewed Publications: 623 since 2004
- Total Current Research Dollars (yearly): \$14.455,311
- Number of Researchers: 35 (Philadelphia—20; Pittsburgh—15)
- We currently support 92 research projects, with 24 projects directly supporting fellows or junior faculty.
- 11 VA Merit Research awards were awarded to MIRECC investigators.
- We have continued the successful competitive peer-review MIRECC Pilot Projects Research Program with support from the VISN.

Clinical Support

- The MIRECC is supporting 14 clinical projects.
- We worked closely with VISN leadership to secure enhancement funding for well over 200 positions for behavioral health in VISN4.
- Several VISN4 clinical programs, specifically those that focus on homeless veterans, integrated care, suicide prevention, and implementation of the VHA recovery model, grew directly out of VISN4 MIRECC-based initiatives.
- We are supporting the deployment of the Behavioral Health Laboratory in nine of ten VISN sites and in over 25 other sites nationwide.

Educational Support

- The MIRECC Post-Doctoral program has three outstanding fellows, each securing pilot funding and initiating research projects:
 - Leslie Gellis, Ph.D., working with Dr. Richard Ross, has received VISN 4 Pilot funds to study “CBT for Veterans with PTSD and Sleep Problems.”
 - Bobby Chakravorty, M.D., mentored by Drs. O’Brien and Oslin, was funded for “Treatment of Sleep Problems in Alcohol Dependent Veterans” (VISN 4 Pilot funding).
- Several VISN-wide professional education and training conferences were sponsored by our MIRECC in the past three years. A combination of hub- and spoke-facility-based conferences allowed for a geographically diverse audience of VA healthcare providers on topics of considerable current interest such as suicide, addictions, OEF/OIF veterans, and neuropsychiatry. Of particular note is our support for an annual MIRECC/PADRECC neuropsychiatry teaching day and several regional conferences focused on suicide prevention.
- The MIRECC is responsible for the National Buprenorphine Consultation phone help line.

Collaborative Partners

- VAPHS, PVAMC, and VISN4
- Academic and Private Sector Affiliates: University of Pittsburgh, University of Pennsylvania
- VISN4 Centers of Excellence: CESATE, CHERP, GRECC, and PADRECC
- Other VAMCs, MIRECCs, PERC, SMITREC, and National Centers of Excellence